A Discourse on Tradition and Liberty:

Introducing developments in the Western Tradition For and Against Liberty - Part 1

I recently read the work “Short History in 50 Tyrants” by Ben Gazur. It is a generic historical work, discussing various tyrants throughout history. On P.10, it is written “When the tyrant speaks, it becomes the law. Tyranny is usually accompanied by repressive laws, harsh punishments and cruel oppressions.” He gives various examples, such as Qin Shi Huang, Genghis Khan, Stalin, Mussolini, Hitler, Pol Pot, Saddam Hussein, etc.

These tyrants have existed across the ages, continuing into modernity. This brings into question historical narratives surrounding liberty and tradition - Does Tradition facilitate Liberty? Or does it go directly against it? There is a lot of nuance and complexity at play here - there is no denying that, in many cases, traditional values or teachings have been used to justify repression of liberty. However, it is important to note how these traditional values, or various developments within these traditions, facilitate Liberty.

Furthermore, Tradition, or certain traditional values, may be useful to preserve and operationalise liberty in its proper context and manner, especially as the Enlightenment and Liberal projects come increasingly more under assault. This essay will particularly focus on demonstrating how tradition, or developments within it, can be used to protect liberty of thought or conscience. Of course, there are plenty of works for or against tradition preserving liberty. Nevertheless, I will present a particular perspective on this, from which I hope my readers can benefit from.

The Western Tradition:

To begin with, let us reference Dr Carroll Quigley’s excellent work ‘Tragedy and Hope’. To summarise his perspective, the ideas of Individualism and Individual liberty stem from developments within the Western tradition. These are derived from various aspects of this tradition, such as certain Christian ideas (eg. Man is made in God’s image). He also discusses “Both”, as the answer to fundamental conflicts that have played out in the Western tradition that led to subsequent developments (e.g. the conflict between Protestantism and Catholicism). He also discusses pluralism and approximations to the truth as being concepts that have developed within this tradition. He hoped that our current age, defined by being a Post-WW2 one, would continue upon the patterns of Inclusive Diversity. Dr Caroll Quigley lived at the beginning of this era, in particular during the Post-WW2 boom. However, it seems that this Age of Inclusive Diversity in the west is soon coming to an end.

In other words, for Dr Carroll Quigley, the West is represented by its Humanitarian aspects, not just its scientific and technological developments. Like has been said, these may have been developments derived from certain Christian teachings. For example, when we look at a Catholic work of theology, such as the “Catechism of the Catholic Church” by Geoffrey Chapman, we find on P.81:
“Being in the image of God, the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons.”

On P.384, it is further written:
“By free will, he is capable of directing himself toward his true good. He finds his perfection ‘in seeking and loving what is true and good’.”
“By virtue of his soul and his spiritual powers of intellect and will, man is endowed with freedom, an ‘outstanding manifestation of the divine image’.”
“Man, enticed by the Evil One, abused his freedom at the very beginning of history.”
“In man, true freedom is an ‘outstanding manifestation of the divine image’”. (GS 17)

On P.388:
“Man is rational and therefore like God; he is created with free will and is master over his acts… Human freedom is a force for growth and maturity in truth and goodness; it attains its perfection when directed towards God, our beatitude… ‘the slavery of sin’... Freedom makes man responsible for his acts to the extent that they are voluntary… Freedom is exercised in relationships between human beings… natural right to be recognised as a free and responsible being… the right to the exercise of this freedom… is an inalienable requirement of the dignity of the human person… within the limits of the common good and public order.”

On P.390, talking in the context of the ‘economy of salvation’:
“... economic, social, political and cultural conditions that are needed for a just excersice of freedom are too often disregarded or violated.”
“He redeemed them from the sin that held them in bondage.’For freedom Christ has set us free’.”
“ ‘where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom’.”
“ ‘liberty of the children of God’.”
“ The grace of Christ is not in the slightest way a rival of our freedom when this freedom accords with the sense of the true and the good that God has put in the human heart.”

For a more Protestant, perhaps liberal perspective, let us see William Barclays’ “The Plain Man Looks At The Apostles Creed”, from Whitman’s Leaves of Grass:

“Health, peace, salvation universal,
Is it a dream?”

“Belief in universal restoration is no new belief and no modern heresy. It has always been deeply rooted in the thinking of the Church.”

He mentions that the first, perhaps greatest, exponent of this belief is Origen, responding to pagan Celsus. “He neither denied the fire nor the torture, but he held that they were purification as well as punishment.” He even went to the extent that rebellious angels, even Satan himself, will be saved, brought into willing submission to God.

He further brings differing opinions on this, such as Eternal Punishment, Conditional Immortality, and Universal Restoration. “No one is going to be dogmatic about this”, so he says. “... a Father who can never be content when even a single child of his is outside the circle of his love.”

Of course, it may not be so simple as just that Christian or religious teachings lead to ideals of individual liberty. In fact, certain teachings may be used, or may actively support ideals of Authoritarianism or Repression. The same may be said about other faiths, such as islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Judaism, etc. Inquisitions, Wars, Conflicts, Schisms - that history can’t

be downplayed. At the same time, we can understand how certain teachings or ideals further advance conceptions of liberty. This may be understood as the “Dual Nature” argument advanced by Marxists such as Engels and Neo-Marxists such as Maduro (See the Napier Press published Aqa Sociology textbooks 1 and 2). Or, it may be understood in the terminology of Paul Johnson, who in his work “Modern Times”, discusses the paradoxical nature of organised religion. In any case, it is important to understand how certain religious teachings can give rise to certain ideals promoting concepts of liberty.

Others, of course, are more critical of religion, as a tool to suppress the individual and repress individual liberty. We thus have the likes of the Postmodernists, such as Lyotard, who see religion as a metanarrative amongst many metanarratives, asserting claims to absolute truth. The father of Postmodernism, Nietzsche, suggests "Truth will have no Gods before it. —The belief in truth begins with the doubt of all truths in which one has previously believed” (The Dawn of Day). And "Yet everything evolved: there are no eternal facts as there are no absolute truths. Accordingly, historical philosophising is henceforth indispensable, and with it honesty of judgment” (Human, All Too Human). Furthermore, we have those who talk of Discourses, such as Foucault and Butler (See Napier Press Aqa Sociology Textbooks 1 and 2).

However, we fundamentally arrive at an issue with the Postmodernist approach. We can of course point out the Paradox at the heart of Postmodernism, that there is no Objective Truth, which is itself a claim to Objective Truth, hence invalidating itself. I have previously made a video trying to solve this paradox, where I have advocated a socio-hermeneutic approach, not an epistemological or philosophical one (https://youtu.be/JgKKJxkF2_8?si=gvocoiSafD9c5ADN). I draw upon this idea from Rolf-Peter Horstmann’s introduction to the “Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy” edition of “Beyond Good and Evil”, where he gives the explanation or solution to this paradox. Nevertheless, there is another point to be raised here from this - the idea of discourses themselves, is just another discourse. Or, whatever one may hope to replace our current discourses with will simply be new discourses. In other words, tradition will never truly go away, but may be replaced by one form or another. Furthermore, simply taking tradition to be the collective wisdom of a society accumulated over time, it fundamentally is an intellectual, spiritual and cultural product that stems from the people. As such, it is an organic thing, a natural development, an aspect of human and social evolution. As such, we may assert that liberty, as a concept or ideal, stems from order, stems from tradition, from the principles underpinning these. As such, there is no meaning to operationalising or maximising liberty, precisely in context of other than some kind of social or civilisational tradition. If anything, the ideals of individual liberty, or individualism, not operationalised properly, can become a from of tyranny itself.

This is where we may differ from the Postmodernists - whilst their kind of deconstructionist narrative has tremendous benefits, what they don’t seem to acknowledge, is that postmodernity signifies the subsequent return of tradition. As when you deconstruct a given reality, you will arrive at its core essence - perhaps not fully knowable or understandable to

man, but that objective reality is there. And hence, man has no choice but to reconstruct from the ground up. But whilst Postmodernists may lament at this, we celebrate it, not as the return to dogmatism, superstition, or irrationality, but rather, as a return to what is organic, what stems from people, and the certainty of man to act in this world, in accordance with the transcendent, the ideal.

Hence, liberty may only properly be operationalised in the context of a tradition, which places limits and bounds on it, alongside securings its importance and status. Tradition must thus have in-built mechanisms to protect individualism and individual liberty - we thus have a choice in the times ahead, whether or not to “reconstruct” a tradition, from the ashes - one that dignifies the individual, and by extension, the collective whole.

What are some important developments which contributed to the development of ideas of Liberty within the Western tradition? It is important to note that not every single development led to new ideas of liberty - in fact, even what may seem as the opposite may be true. For example, in Peter Ackroyd’s work “Civil War”, he discusses the ideas of Hobbes. Based in the context of Civil War which had engulfed England at the time, Hobbes thought that “stripped of order and security, men are at enmity one with another in “a perpetual contention for honour, riches and authority.”” “A form of contract might be agreed whereby each man is ‘contented with so much liberty against other men as he would allow other men against himself’.” The instinct for self-preservation is a key element of Hobbes' metaphysics, as the very foundation of his theory of the state. “The contract between men is the beginning of wisdom.” This would be maintained by “a common power set over them both, with right and force sufficient to compel performance.” It “must be an authority… enforce the contract in perpetuity; supreme authority demands supreme power…”
Thus, there would be a living absolutism, the “great leviathan”. It would impose the religion of the state, and there would be no such thing as liberty of conscience. “Justice is simply what the law demands”. He was subsequently denounced as an Atheist and Materialist.

We can also see how said developments advancing the cause of liberty, may in fact possibly signify a break in said tradition. However, in other terms, it may also be considered a possible extension of it. Thus, whilst the American political project may be considered a kind of break away from the British political tradition in certain important aspects, it may be considered an extension of it, or of the broader western tradition. Thus, you may consider it as a break away by abstracting certain political ideals as ends in themselves, rather as developments stemming from a tradition (based within the context of the British Peoples and their history), and undermining or having a kind of fundamental conflict with key tenets of it (such as with the institution of monarchy, albeit in a constitutional form). At the same time, the American project is very much the logical extension of certain developments within the British, and broader Western traditions. Self-evidently, the United States is building upon the liberal project, itself an extension of the enlightenment project. As the Enlightenment project comes increasingly under attack (as Davies asserts, see Napier Press published Sociology textbooks), the foundation of the American project comes increasingly under attack as well.

Interestingly, were our current Post-WW2 age of inclusive diversity, and the liberal consensus order to come to an end, what may replace may be Anti-Liberal, even Anti-Enlightenment.

Indeed, the advent of the internet has led to an Information revolution (as mentioned by Heather Wraight as part of the Postmodern worldview, alongside individuality without belonging, (see Future Church by Peter Brierley)), but has then also given rise to, amongst various other philosophies and factions, the Online Right, who have been inspired in part by the “Dark Enlightenment”.You see the rise of “Alternative Facts”, of an increasingly fragmented and polarised discourse, of a kind of hyperreality, where everything is a 4D abstraction, a kind of simulacra, for the real thing (in reference to Baudrillard). What we are perhaps experiencing is the phenomena of the “Digital Town Square”, where online voices gather to share different ideas and views (See my Video - https://youtu.be/g8_jP86dqWU?si=csDC0HQu8uQ2MEaY) - a return to a kind of Oral culture, where hearsay, tales and anecdotes carry weight as well .

Do we have a rise in abstract thought as well? The Information revolution has created an incredible diversity in viewpoints and perspectives, of nuanced and various perspectives, of new intellectual developments and advancements. And yet, this access to an unlimited amount of information has also created the conditions for nihilism, for an incredible degree of uncertainty, of existential angst and crisis. For, given the unlimited amount of information available to us, the human mind, the human senses, testimony - indeed, any path and route to knowledge, is fallible and limited, insofar as humans are fallible beings, not insofar as to whether or not there is an objective reality. Indeed, we are bound by our own subconscious biases, our own interpretive lens (reference to PF Jung’s video, expanding upon Jordan Peterson's ideas on this subject: https://youtu.be/6JB6YgmeAr4?si=JH_2UieYU3iOrWJL). As such, the incredible amount of information, perspectives and opinions undermine certainty, leading to a collapse of faith in or adherence to metanarratives, or ideologies, or systems of thought which assert a claim to truth.

And yet, sown within this are the very seeds by which tradition, or some semblance of it, may be restored. For in fragmented discourse, a discourse of no unifying nature, one where there are any numbers of facts, pieces of information, or viewpoints and opinions on offer, people will default back onto identity. This creates the intellectually militaristic conditions of emotional, personal discourse. And yet, within this are the seeds of contradiction, the seeds of destruction, for the very intellectual tools provided facilitate the very attitudes set to undermine those views. Thus, a dialectical struggle now forms, between the proliferation of information and viewpoints and the struggle against it, as people default back onto their identities, emotions and own personal views, so as to maintain some kind of worldview. The latter by nature is exclusionary,, intolerant to the out-group of ideas, sympathetic to the in-group of ideas. Each and every group thus engages in a conflict of discourse and ideas, by the very tools which continually undermine said conflict. This contradiction is further emphasised by the attempts at censorship in the online sphere by certain corporations, despite these being ultimately futile due the nature of the internet to allow for dissemination of knowledge and viewpoints in a decentralised manner. Thus, with the ever increasing attempts to centralise the spread of information, and silence certain views, this contradiction intensifies. We further see how echo chambers enforcing certain narratives intensifies this contradiction - despite the endless amount of facts and viewpoints, each individual is further

shown that which appeals to him, further intensifying this contradiction. This dialectical process, this contradiction which pushes forward online dialogue (which, if we are to believe Baudrillard, may have become a kind of hyperreality, perhaps even more real for vast swathes of humanity than reality itself), sows the seeds of destruction for the very form of organisation of these ideas and their proliferation, the tools of which precisely create the conditions for this discussion (this may draw inspiration by the ideas of Marx and Hegel, see the Penguin Classics edition of The Communist Manifesto, introduction by Gareth Stedman Jones).
Thus, the ever enlarging number of ideas, the ever increasing exposure to facts, the ever expanding nature of discourse, creates the conditions for the restoration of identity-based tradition. As the “ought” of humanity becomes uncertain, as man's consciousness seems to lead him down a road of further and further uncertainty, so he now returns to be grounded in the “is”, his very “ought” to be grounded in his very “is”, what is right deemed so by the very nature of it being so, context-bound and context-based (See Imperium Press Substack: https://substack.com/@imperiumpress?utm_source=share&utm_medium=android&r=2x9vt5).

Truth, now being grounded in the “Is”, defaults upon the essence of reality, in and of itself, in its very essence when its historical manifestations and derived social constructs are deconstructed and dissolved.

From the Islamic, and broader Theistic perspective, we default back unto the First, Necessary Being - The Divine. Who is the origin of all existence and being. For others, they may view it as the material reality in and of itself, which is real by its very being, for there is no meaning for some kind of abstract, transcendental existence (for example, see Baron d'Holbach's ‘Systems of Nature’, or Imperium Press’s Substack). Others may assert an underlying idealistic nature to reality, whereby the material reality is merely imperfect imitations of abstract and unchanging ideas (such as the Idealism of Plato). And yet, regardless, man now defaults back onto the essence of reality, after the deconstruction of the social constructions based on said reality, and hence the reconstruction, now takes place.

He now defaults back onto that within which he is context-bound, context-based, and hence the organic basis for his or her identity. In other words, he identifies in terms of his blood, his lineage, his tribe, yet simultaneously he identifies with the transcendental - The Divine, Tradition, Civilisation and Nation. It is now this, after the seeds of destruction were sown by the very tools of a modern, late-modern, indeed even postmodern world, that now humankind reverts back to this.

And yet, man is bound between his identity as part of his species, sharing one genus, and man as part of many different groups and tribes. The dialectical process means that the fundamental contradiction, and thus conflict, between exclusionary and inclusionary, unifying and particularising, globalising and regionalising, identity is intensified. The gradual unifying forms of identity manifesting over the course of history are at odds with the forces of tribalism and particularism, leading to the furthering of this dialectic over the course of history.

(Yuval Noah Harari mentions in his work Sapiens: “In time, human violence was brought under control through the development of larger social frameworks – cities, kingdoms and states. But it took thousands of years to build such huge and effective political structures.” “AFTER THE AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION, human societies grew ever larger and more complex, while the imagined constructs sustaining the social order also became more elaborate.” “...empires have managed to unite diverse ethnic groups and ecological zones under a single political umbrella, thereby fusing together larger and larger segments of the human species and of planet Earth … The imperial steamroller gradually obliterated the unique characteristics of numerous peoples (such as the Numantians), forging out of them new and much larger groups.” Yet one should also acknowledge this in the context of various particularising or exclusionary forces throughout history, thus creating the conditions for this kind of dialectic. Are we heading toward a kind of one world government, or are we headed to a Multipolar world? Will these possibilities be either a good or a bad thing?

A possible critique is that many universal ideas may also be exclusionary in nature. Yet at the same time, such ideas may be assimilated and reappropriated for particularist ends. The opposite is also true, that certain, at least theoretically, in essence, particularist ideas, may be used for certain universalist, or unifying ends. Furthermore, it is not simply a universal or particular binary at play here - there may be a wide spectrum involved, such as pan-civilisational, but not globalist.)

What shall be the culmination of this dialectical process? Is it a necessary characteristic of History, or a mere possibility that has happened to manifest over history? Is this the correct way to frame this or not, or is this one of many possible, perhaps correct ways to frame history? What shall be the culmination and trajectory of all this - shall humanity unite after a long struggle into one common identity, or shall they disintegrate and return to the “organic”, the tribal, the particular? Does this characterise our period of history, or will this be an “end of history” kind of trajectory? Or, will something else happen after this culmination, perhaps another consequence of this dialectical process? Perhaps one which we can't even account for? What if this supposed “end-point” isn't really the end-point? What shall humanity do if they are united as one - conquer space? Or perhaps work on bringing about utopia for all? Or perhaps will the dialectical process play out again, only for this global nation to dissolve? If humanity were to be particularised, will they remain peaceful with one another, or will the seeds be sown for another conflict? Most likely, as has tragically been proven throughout history, exclusionary ideas lead to dehumanisation of the other - yet will the information revolution contribute to more humanisation, to greater attempts to understand the other, or will it simply create the conditions to reinforce in-group preference and more distrust of the other?

This is less to assert who is in the right or wrong, but rather to merely delineate this possible dialectical process. And so, despite all conflict and all progress, seemingly in vain, human trudges on, through the course of history…

(Ps: I think I cooked so hard I forgot what I was talking about in the first place lol).

Returning back to our topic from this tangent of mine, what may be understood from all of this? Regardless of if you agree or not, we may at least acknowledge that our liberty, or at

least our exercise of it, is operationalised within the context of our/based in context-bound identity. In a postmodern condition, this theoretically would be bound by the values we choose to adopt for ourselves, in an uncertain and fragmented world. However, paradoxically, as people increasingly default back onto “traditional” forms of identity, so that is what binds liberty. Liberty, within the context of, and in the way in which it is contextualised by, said tradition.

For the American, this may by nature be a kind of Civic identity, based in the history and political/philosophical tradition of the United States, despite being under attack as the enlightenment project comes under scrutiny. A further defaulting back on a Christian, possibly Pan-Western, identity may be in the works here.

It is interesting to note certain developments within the context of the United States and its foundation. For example, the most self-evident example of this is the Declaration of Independence. Nothing quite like it has ever truly been written - for the United States is unique in its basis for existing, for it does not draw upon a kind of ethnic or tribal identity, but rather on a fundamentally propositional one.

There is an interesting parallel between the Islamic Caliphate and The American Project - the fundamental basis for Governance is along propositional lines, not (at least theoretically) along ethnic or cultural lines. There is an interesting conversation regarding the idea of Asabiyyah (tribalism) as expounded upon by Ibn Khaldun - he essentially considers it a prerequisite condition for any new state to emerge, as gradually later generations, particularly in more urbanised areas, forget the struggles of their ancestors, and gradually fall into decadence, hence they lose this prerequisite asabiyyah. This allows for those with this prerequisite asabiyyah to organise and conquer, replacing the old, and repeat this cycle.

A fundamental point is whether or not this is merely an ethnic or cultural phenomena, or whether it extends to ideology, whether religious or secular, in organising a kind of civilisational force. It seems (and God knows best) that it is certainly possible, and indeed has occurred in many notable instances - however, there are certain conditions to this. Even in the propositional cases, it still is very much latched on to/based within the context of some kind of dominant ethnic group and culture (eg. The American project being connected to the Anglo-Saxon Settlers in America, and the Islamic caliphate initially being connected to Arabs, but later on to Persians and Turks). Also, it at times is steeped in some kind of shared history, tradition, culture, etc, that is powerful enough to transcend and unite. But nevertheless, this is very much the exception, and not the norm. Of course, there is a kind of ambiguity and nuance here, that the line between propositional and non-propositional, between ethnic/cultural and ideological can be blurry and difficult to distinguish.

An interesting case here, for example, would be to take something like ethnonationalism. In its essence, it posits a number of “Is” claims. These, in and of themselves, may be considered as valid. However, the conclusions that are often derived from these are very much “ought”/propositional ones. Thus, ethnonationalists may claim to be grounded in the “Is”, but in truth, the subsequent conclusions, upon which they seek to organise society, are

very much “ought” propositional claims. If one were to say that the “ought” is grounded in the “is”, that is to fundamentally diminish the fundamental difference and distinction between the two, rendering said distinction meaningless. But furthermore, the application of said principle by the ethnonationalists is by no means objective, for the conclusions drawn upon by them are not necessary consequences of accepting those very same “Is” facts.

For example, we can take a historical perspective regarding ethnicity and culture. There is certainly truth to the claim that there are different ethnicities, with their unique identities and history/tradition. At the same time, this idealisation of a kind of (supposedly homogenous) people, a kind of “inherent” set of values or traditions, is plainly false. For indeed, even amongst the same groups of people, inter-tribal and sub-ethnic conflicts have still raged on. This is not to even begin to discuss the migrations, invasions, genocides, etc that occurred.

Nor is this to mention that the traditions of a people undergo enormous change and development - what may be viewed as an “inherent set of values” of a people at one point in time may be completely different, even contradictory, to what they're viewed as later on. As such, there is no one agreed upon definition of said values. Although we can talk in general terms and trends, in context of various historical developments.

We can understand culture as a product which stems from the people who help shape and produce it, yet it is not an inherent aspect of a group of people. It is not literally genetically hardwired into them. Nor were these self-evident truths always known to one group of peoples across time and place. They were gradual developments, oftentimes met with severe opposition, even culminating in cycles of violence and repression.

In particular, what many western reactionaries and conservatives have got to understand is that many aspects of the tradition which they take pride in, were opposed by reactionaries and conservatives within their own time. The same can be said within the context of other traditions. For example, many Traditionalist Muslims (including Sunnis and Shias) should appreciate that many of the developments they take pride in were opposed by certain notable segments of the very same tradition. These values clearly are not self-evident, for they were the result of thousands of years of developments, not inherent facets of culture that these societies began existing with.

Furthermore, history does in fact show ethnic groups are not merely entirely homogenous entities, but rather subject to constant fluctuations and changes. Tribal and sub-ethnic conflict is but all too common, and invasions, migrations, and even ethnic cleansing and genocide is but all too common. At the same time, there are certainly ethnic groups, insofar as they are distinct and different from other groups, with, once again, a culture that stems from the peoples who have helped develop it.

The point being, that whilst there are very real differences between peoples, we should understand for what they are - the products of thousands of years of history, of developments, of evolution, of an organic process which has spanned all of humanity. Taking a kind of holistic, historical perspective prevents this kind of exclusionary attitude, downplaying other cultures and glorifying wilful ignorance or even disingenuous dislike of them in the name of national pride and patriotism. As in truth, these cultures, and the peoples to whom they belong to, adapted and developed, constantly changing over time -

the results of complicated historical, social, political processes, not to mention all those individuals who actively helped shape them.

As such, different cultural ideals of attitudes will fundamentally have their strengths and weaknesses. The success or strength of a civilisation is not merely determined by certain cultural or ideological factors, nor merely by certain socioeconomic factors. In reality, these, and many more variables go into the success of a civilisation. There may be at times, great fortune, where a set of variables happen to go right, which allow for a civilisation to thrive. It certainly does not downplay the efforts of great people to bring about such glory for their respective nations and civilisations.

Yet nevertheless, history shows that being an advanced, or powerful country, is not the exclusive property of one or another ideology or culture or ethnic group. Interestingly enough, Neoconservative Samuel Huntington in his book "Clash of Civilisations" mentions that:
"The West won the world not by the superiority of its ideas or values or religion (to which few members of other civilizations were converted) but rather by its superiority in applying organized violence. Westerners often forget this fact; non-Westerners never do."

There is no guarantee, that in a century from now, that the west shall be, or that the United States in particular, shall be the most powerful nation in the world, whether on the basis of its technological or scientific progress, military might, or indeed, upon the basis of its political and cultural ideals.

Indeed, different civilisations reached the heights of technological and scientific progress whilst being based upon completely different assumptions. Indeed, even the dominant ideology of the "West" (speaking in broad or loose terms), has undergone multiple paradigm shifts, throughout the past 200-300 years, broadly speaking. Yes, certain ideals may contribute or play into scientific and technological progress, but they are not exclusively due to, and do not only stem from, these ideals. Indeed, the rise of China as a competitor to the United States, the gradual shift to a multipolarity (which, on a deeper level, is just another version of globalism, just another stage for the elites to orchestrate events on), the rise of extremism, particularly in the Muslim world, and the fragmenting and polarisation of western societies, a decline in trust, and atomisation and loneliness, coupled with a mental health epidemic, serve to in fact disprove the thesis of "the end of history" in real time. Although Fukuyama's thesis has more nuance and substance to it, and can at times be misunderstood, it is ultimately important to note the naivety of thinking that one political system is so self-evidently correct and true, that it marks the culmination of all human development. As NeoCon Samuel Huntington mentions, that every society, whether the Abbasids, Mughals, etc, who thought that they were the culmination of history, inevitably went into decline.

In the context of the American Political Tradition, we may discuss how it is either a breakaway from the British political tradition, or an extension of it. I have made a video on this topic in the past: https://youtu.be/4zgfS1FM7bI.

To put it concisely - whilst the American Political project takes the ideals that can be found within the British (and broader Western) philosophical “tradition(s)”, it divorces them from being connected to a specific ethnic identity, and makes them ideals in and of themselves. Hence, why the American identity is fundamentally a propositional one, not an ethnic one. Of course, it was very much within the context of a dominant Anglo-Saxon culture, but one can see how this sowed the seed for the kind of multiracial United States we see today. However, the United States is still distinctively a Western nation, which inevitably raises the questions as to how much ethnicity and culture is related? And to what extent a multiracial society still adheres to a dominant culture?

I now reference Andrew Robert's work “George III”, where he engages in revisionism as regards to the biography and rul of the late monarch. Naturally, any discussion on George III's rule will bring up the subject of the American war of Independence. Some important context should be taken into consideration here:

Certain Progressive Imperialist thinkers, such as writers Thomas Whately MP, and Thomas Pownall MP, former government of Massachusetts, who asserted that a “mutual socio-economic development of all the English-speaking peoples living around and trading across it.” (Christie, ‘British Politics and the American Revolution’, P.208).

This “saw Britons on both sides of the Atlantic as belonging to one nation… ultimate sovereign authority, from which the entire community drew rights, but to which in turn it owed obligations and allegiance.”

“In practice, the British government seldom exercised its powers over them directly and the American provinces were governed by royal governors and directly elected assemblies… Over a century or more, the colonies had developed their own institutions of government… the result by the mid-eighteenth was an informal quasi-independence, with mere lip service paid… Edmund Burke dubbed this practice ‘salutary neglect’; the de facto devolution of autonomy from the imperial centre to its colonial peripheries.”

Regarding the subsequent protests of the Americans against the British, and their nature as discussed by the historians, he mentions - “Yet this is to misinterpret the coming American protestations over taxation as purely economic, which by 1763 they were not. They were, rather, proxy protest against British political control by a people who sensed they could now thrive as an independent country. The underlying issue was not taxation, or indeed representation: it was about sovereignty, independence and self-government - once Britain had made North America safe from foreign threats.”

In other words, the United States, most likely, would regardless have been founded at one point or another. Indeed, historical processes were to play out such that the independence of these American colonies would have come about, in one way or another. But certain catalysts were to cause events to play out the way they did in the course of history.

We can also see how the United States, being founded upon the principles of “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness”, is not only or just based upon this kind of classical liberalism, it is furthermore taking certain ideals, from within the context of the Enlightenment. It is furthermore taking these principles specifically in a manner developed and evolved within the English/Anglo-Saxon tradition, in contrast to the, say, for example, Continental tradition(s).

But nevertheless, a few important breakaways do occur here. Of course, as mentioned, by abstracting these ideals away from being attached to a specific ethnic group, even if initially it was based within the context of a dominant Anglo-Saxon culture. But furthermore, one of the most important distinctions to be made is that the American Political project is Republican by nature, insofar as the United States is not a monarchy. In fact, on principle, considering the context of the war of independence, it is fundamentally against the institution of monarchy, even the constitutional monarchy of the British.

Turning our gaze to the British Political Tradition (quoting from the book ‘Great Civilisations’), we see written in the context of the monarchy: “never absolute but were always subject to the input of a body of advisers.” We see the gradual development of the political institutions of the British throughout the course of their history - for example: “the Norman and later nobles who believed they had a natural right to advise in the formation of an increasingly influential, and ultimately, paramount, Parliament.” We also see the gradual enshrining of rights within the law, for example, the “Magna Carta (1215) which limited royal powers and protected the barons’ rights.” We further see, perhaps even more radical changes or events, which had incredible implications. For example, the execution of Charles I after the English Civil War, which served to undermine the doctrine of the Divine Rights of Kings. In the context of James II attempting to restore Roman Catholicism, ultimately, a constitutional monarchy system was gradually brought into place. We also see how the development of the Anglican Church, based on protestantism, fostered a kind of Euroscepticism. Indeed, the events of Brexit may, at least partially, be traced back to this period of English history.

We thus see these gradual developments taking place within the context of the broader British political, and indeed philosophical, tradition. We also see gradual developments taking place within the context of the American project. For example, the Declaration of Independence - that political document of great historical importance, of which its like has never quite been written. (From A History of the United States by Cecil Chesterton, P.19): “The introductory paragraphs of the Declaration of Independence contain the whole substance of the faith upon which the new commonwealth was to be built.” (Quoting from the Declaration of Independence): “When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another… decent respect for the opinion of mankind requires that they shall declare the cause that impels the separation. We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of those ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and and to reinstitute a new government…”

We also see how the founding fathers, educated and learned men that they were, were grounded within the context of the various aspects of the broader “Western” philosophical tradition,as well as being learned about various world cultures and traditions - the typical archetype of “Renaissance men”. For example, “Jefferson himself, a Deist (the claim sometimes made that he was a “Christian”... expressed admiration for… character and teaching of Jesus Christ), never for a moment forfeited the confidence of his countrymen on that account…”.

Furthermore, “...the Americans… (had a) keener perception of the logic of its limitations (i.e. of the secular constitution).” They knew full well its weaknesses and strengths. Various gradual developments were also made or realised, based on the debates surrounding certain aspects of the constitution, or based on the application of the principles upon which the United States was founded. Naturally, and self-evidently, one such discussion is that regarding “...slavery… universal in the English colonies… generally approved by American opinion, North and South… Before the end of the War of Independence it was almost as generally disapproved, and in all states north of the borders of Maryland it soon ceased to exist.” We further see divides and discussions, such as the Federalist and Anti-Federalist debate, and the debate about state rights (a debate which played a big part during the American civil war, alongside the debate regarding slavery).

We note how the different aspects of the “Western tradition” had an impact on the development of the United States. We have mentioned the role the secular, rationalist, Enlightenment values had to play, but alongside that, we also see the role of Christianity, for example. Indeed, the United States is quite a religious nation, despite being, in nature, a secular, liberal one. Of course, certain liberal teachings may find their basis within certain Christian texts, and the values of individualism in particular, may be inspired by certain teachings such as that “Man is made in the image of God”.

For example, in Peter Brierley’s work “Future Church”, it is written (on p.51):
“One person in 6 in North America is Baptist (compared to 1 in 220 in the rest of the world). Maybe the American flair for independence and individualism fit the Baptist ethos of independence and its theology of individual responsibility. Is it accidental that so much of North America is Baptist?”

This raises a further question (as mentioned on P.146): “Does the Baptist culture of independence help shape American independence, or does the American independent way of life form a natural fertile soil for Baptistic people?”

Interestingly enough, a common accusation thrown at King George III was that he was a “Papist” (which was not true), as one of the many objections the Americans raised towards him. It reflects something profoundly important - the skepticism towards catholicism, reflecting the kind of protestant spirit inherent to many Americans. Of course, one can see how the doctrines of Sola Scriptura, of the kind of skepticism towards bureaucratic religious organisations, naturally lend well to the American perspective.

Of course, there are various critiques of the American political model. One such critique I have derived is from Mario Puzo’s famous work “The Godfather”. Of course, a story about the Mafia will naturally lead to a set of interesting conclusions, but one such is that authority

inevitably arises in a power vacuum. For example, in the context of Sicily (at least as the story goes), the mafia may in fact have more authority than the government. Or even more trust than them. In the United States, where the government is absent, or does not intervene, inevitably, alternative hierarchies arise. We can extend this to transnational corporations which may have unregulated monopolies over whole markets, for example. This critique can thus be extended to Libertarian, or even Anarchist thought, where, in the absence of a state, alternative power structures and hierarchies inevitably arise anyways to take command, very much so in place of the state.

However, a counter to this may be that were the state to control certain sectors of the market, let's say, it would inevitably lead to the stifling of trade and business within these sectors, reducing the incentive for novelty or innovation within these markets. Hence, the kind of bureaucratic system that comes with a state involved would be problematic. This is something that even somebody like Ibn Khaldun discusses (See Nusoos Mukhtarah min Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldun by Dr. Muhammad Abdah).

At the same time, Ibn Khaldun is not necessarily a libertarian, in so far as he does still see it necessary for economic stability (for example, in the case of the fair redistribution of wealth to the poor and needy, something emphasised within Islamic economic models). At the same time, for him, direct intervention in the markets was a problem, to say the least. Hence, a kind of balance was what he desired from the state. The state shouldn’t be an intervening, overwhelming force, it should grant a kind of general freedom in the marketplace, but it should not be an absolute one, such that it does not get involved in those things which are necessary for the state to get involved in (See Asrar Rashid’s “Intellectual Intifada” for more).

Eric Hobsbawm, in his work “The Age of Empires 1875 - 1914”, writes on p.85/6 - “Democracy, as the sagacious Aristotle had observed, was the government of the mass of the people, who were, on the whole, poor.” Different groups and classes within society have different interests. The fundamental issue raised, self-evidently, was not one policy could be said to represent all of the society - compounded over party/ideological lines and multiple issues, and what you get was different groups voting for/lobbying upon the basis of different interests. This, of course, apart from perhaps creating issues with social cohesion, of course raise issues as to the functionality of democracy. It was, very much, the “basic dilemma of nineteenth-century liberalism” (cf. The Age of Capital, Chapter 6,1).

In many cases, the issues with democracy were simply sidestepped by being non-democratic. In many cases, the majority of male citizens tended to be excluded, let alone the totality of female inhabitants. After all, what would happen if masses of people, ignorant, brutalised, controlled the political fate of states? As such, we see how the social revolution in 1871 so terrified the respectable. Lord Salisbury in 1866, feared that such would lead to communism.

“Yet after 1870 it became increasingly clear that the democratisation of the politics of states was quite inevitable.” “The masses would march on to the stage of politics, whether rulers liked it or not.” “And this is indeed what happened.” “Electoral systems based on a wide

franchise, sometimes even in theory on universal male suffrage, already existed in the 1870s in France, in Germany (at any rate for the all-German Parliament), in Switzerland and in Denmark."

In Britain, we observe the Reform Acts of 1867 and 1883, increased the electorate by 4 times, or, in other words, 8% to 29% of men, above the age of 20. In Belgium, there was democratised franchise in 1894, following general strike for this reform (the increase was from 3.9% to 37.3% of the adult male population). Norway doubled it in 1898 (from 16.6% to 34.8%).

These "Developments … viewed without enthusiasm by the governments that introduced them, even when… committed by ideological conviction to the representation of the people". Even those nations which we think of as profoundly/historically democratic, such as Scandinavian ones, were quite late to broaden the vote. Amongst conservatives, cynics like Bismarck, had faith in traditional loyalty, of the mass electorate - calculating that universal suffrage would strengthen the Right rather than the Left, yet still maintained the three-class franchise skewed in favour of the Right.

"Elsewhere politicians yielded to popular agitation and pressure, or to calculations of domestic political conflicts." The consequences, of what was called a "leap in the dark" by Disraeli, were quite feared. The Socialist agitations of the 1890s, and the direct/indirect repercussions of the first Russian revolution, accelerated democratisation. "Democratic politics could no longer be postponed. Henceforth the problem was how to manipulate them".

Thus, we can see in the context of the various western nations, the gradual development, and subsequent expansion of, the democratic system. On another interesting note, we can observe the role organised religion has had to play on a political level - both the positives and negatives. As Paul Johnson puts it in his work "Modern Times" - "Yet Organised religion was full of paradoxes." An important case study that can be presented is that of Poland.

Indeed, during the course of the mid to late 1900s, Poland had become the heartland of Catholicism. "First Hitler, then Stalin and his successors had done everything in their power to destroy the Polish Church." Catholicism became a symbol of resistance for many of the Polish, under the iron fist rule of the USSR, "Yet pre-war Poland, where the Church enjoyed special status, proved a less favourable environment for catholicism than the post-war people's republic, where it was actively persecuted." And as to Poland's transition out of communism - "This largely peaceful change of regime showed how powerful the alliance between the human longing for personal freedom and the force of religious belief could be."

(Interestingly enough, for a more esoteric/spiritual perspective, one can consult the work of Jonathan Black, "The Secret History of the World". The following is not a defense or justification of these teachings, but merely to relate this perspective. In it, he expounds upon the perspective that the secret societies are guiding the evolution of man to higher and higher levels of the collective conscience. "In Steiner's philosophy the Archangel Michael has had a very important role in helping to form the capacity that we all enjoy for individual free thought, free will and the ability to choose freely whom we love." "According to Steiner, humans have not always had these faculties, which have developed only in the last few

hundred years". If we take for granted this argument, then we can see these faculties have gradually given rise to the attitudes, ideals, ideologies and systems of thought that we see today.)

For example, we see how prevailing attitudes in liberal capitalist societies, developing in interaction with its competition with the communist regimes during the cold war, led to new political models being adopted in these nations, including the Social Market model, and the Facilitating State (as described by Paul Johnson in his work Modern Times). This was the typical model adopted by many of the "leftist" parties (to use that term quite loosely) of those states. This, of course, is very much the standard model till our day in many of the typical establishment centre-left parties. For example, I have seen similar attitudes reflected in the writings of Barack Obama. Interestingly enough, in his work "Dreams from my Father", he writes regarding his mother, that: "She was a lonely witness for secular humanism, a soldier for the new deal, peace corps, position-paper liberalism."

In his work "The Audacity of Hope", he writes on P.86, in explanation of the Founding Father's teachings - "We consider these rights to be universal, a codification of liberty's meaning, constraining all levels of government and applicable to all people within the boundaries of our political community… presupposes equal worth of every individual… wherever we lie on the political spectrum, we all subscribe to the Founder's teachings." Thus, a fundamental assumption that underpins the American political project being functional, is these underpinning principles upon which the Founding fathers based the American Political project.

" The Founders recognised that there were seeds of anarchy in the idea of individual freedom, an intoxicating danger in the idea of equality, for if everybody is truly free, without the constraints of birth or rank or an inherited social order - if my notion of faith is no better or worse than yours… how can we ever hope to form a society that coheres?"

He then discusses the opinions of the likes of Hobbes and Locke - free men would form governments to ensure that one man's freedom didn't become another man's tyranny. Thus, to a certain extent, they would sacrifice individual license to better preserve their liberty - only democracy could thus fulfil the needs of both freedom and order. Of course, historically at least, the democratic model hasn't been fully successful. And yet the republican form seemed promising - yet still seemed only feasible for a geographically compact/homogenous political community. Yet history seems to vindicate, at least according to Obama, that republican self-government works better in a large and diverse society, as the jarring of parties promotes deliberation and circumspection. Nevertheless, as Obama points out, these debates are on results, not a fundamental worldview disagreement. However, in recent times, increased polarisation and fragmentation of discourse, and the rise of more radical online politics, is proving to be a contemporary challenge to the legitimacy and authority of the current "Liberal" establishment of the United States. Arguably, whilst Trump represents a kind of break in the establishment - a kind of return to strongman politics, it is not necessarily a full, clean break, as Trump is very much part of the Elites - a former reality tv show star/billionaire turned nationalist hero. His coalition still has within it your typical establishment republican types, such as the neocon warhawks and free marketeers, although what we may consider certain "Alt" factions are present in his coalition as well.

In his book “The Selfish Gene”, Altruism or kind/humane treatment of others is within the self-interest of an organism's genetic reproduction and survival. On another interesting note, in a discussion between Jordan Peterson and Richard Dawkins, hosted by Alex O’Connor, the idea that certain Jungian archetypal forms may be genetically assimilated via the Baldwin effect into the genome was discussed, as a possible synthesis (see https://youtu.be/6JB6YgmeAr4?si=ortp5JWbdDEx-D7b from PF Jung’s video, at around 4:15).

On a broader level, we can see the gradual development of certain ideas, and their interaction and effect on the “evolution” of people. This is not per say a clean, linear, form of constant progress. Rather, the collective conscience may gradually develop to the acceptance of different ideals, different forms of government, over time. Abu Layth discusses this here - https://www.youtube.com/live/ZAsz48lX_WI?si=kBOgZsDXEX-majAq where he discusses this idea with Dr. Javed Hashmi. Furthermore, from an esoteric perspective, such an idea is discussed by Jonathan Black in his work “The Secret History of the World”.

This is very much in the context of these ideas being gradually organically developed and accepted. This does not mean they are uniformly accepted, as there will always be dissidents and contrarians (who play an important role in this organic process, pushing forward this evolution and development by a kind of “dialectic”). It also doesn't reject the idea of natural variation within the collective conscience within the bounds of a dominant idea. This can also be considered in terms of conformists (which will be most people), skeptics, retreatists, rebels/renegades, and transcendents/abstractionists. This is borrowing from Merton’s Strain Theory (https://www.tutor2u.net/sociology/reference/sociologist-in-focus-robert-k-merton?srsltid=AfmBOoq_umb2aKKr0Hc43C5PoteIx3mVxmi-7SYAS4WgVavhxR7Jx7YV) although in a very different context.

We can consider, within the collective conscience, certain overarching ideas or systems that are accepted. This isn’t merely one shared collective conscience by all mankind, but, perhaps, alongside that, multiple different collective consciences specific to different groups, upon different scales. For example, we may talk of a civilisational conscience, a conscience of an ethnic or tribal group, a religious conscience, etc. At times, these different forms of collective conscience may latch onto others and intersect with them. Also, these may lay dormant, or unrealised, so to speak, until they are finally “awakened”. In this way, there are cycles which apply to these, and similarly, there are cycles which apply to the underlying ideals expressed in the collective conscience.

This has considerable bearing on our discussion regarding Liberty, as we can understand that there has been a gradual evolution to accepting notions of liberty, individualism, and a gradual development in how these ideals are expressed and understood. We can see this within the context of various traditions , but, in particular, as we have focused on in the past few articles, we can see this gradual development (shifting of the collective conscience), so to speak, in the minds of many Westerners, so to speak.

An important discussion to be had is regarding organised religion and how it pertains to liberty. I will be borrowing from the line of thought that regards organised religion as having a dual nature (as per Marxist and Neo-Marxist thought, such as by Engels, Maduro, etc). Or, one can take the line of Paul Johnson (in his book “Modern Times”) regarding the “paradoxical” nature of organised religion.

An example which may not be very common, but which I believe is worth mentioning, is a booklet entitled “SAHIBZADAS, The youthful heroes of Sikh faith”, which i had the opportunity to get my hands on recently. There seems to be an inbuilt emphasis on resisting state tyranny within the context of the Sikh faith:

“Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh faith, exhorted the people to stand upon truth (Sat)... his message veers round absolute unity of God and equality of humanity… Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur gave their lives to uphold these ideals.”

“The creation of the Khalsa in 1699 A.D. provided the necessary confidence to fight against (the) decaying religious value system along with bigotry and fanaticism.” The example of Zorawar and Fateh Singh are given, who were bricked alive by the Mughals - they were the youngest sons of Guru Gobind Singh. “Stand against evil and oppression".

Oftentimes, its supposed opposite, aka the scientific method of thinking, may be considered as being less prone to this kind of dogmatism. Yet, in reality, as Y.N Harari points out in his work “Homo Deus” - “...scientific revolution itself began in one of the most dogmatic, intolerant, and religious societies in history”. Thus, this historical development within the western context is from the peculiarities of Western history, within the context of certain events within western history. However, those same historical developments, or peculiarities, cannot necessarily be projected onto other civilisations or societies. This isn’t some kind of exceptionalist narrative, but it is simply the demonstrable truth that different civilisations have had differing developments and trajectories - indeed the historical development of various civilisations isn’t necessarily a linear process, not at least in the way we imagine it (https://youtu.be/GtFGOI1qqB8?si=Eg9BGkwW2vkaadzM).

“The luminaries of the scientific revolution lived in a society that expelled Jews and Muslims, burned heretics wholesale… started a new religious war every full moon”. He contrasts this with the Ottoman empire, which took a "multicultural" or “tolerant” metropolis such as Cairo or Istanbul during the 1600s. There, one could find Sunnis, Shiites, Orthodox Christians, Catholics, Armenians, Coptics, Jews, and even the occasional Hindu. Of course, this would have been within the context of a dominant Muslim political settlement, yet, it may be considered a kind of “liberal” paradise, at least in comparison to Europe at the time.

In “The Great Empires of Asia”, published by Thames & Hudson, they mention on P.124 - “...by the empire’s religious and ethnic communities (millets), who enjoyed considerable autonomy regarding education and religious and cultural life.” Thus, we see certain benefits extended to Christian and Jewish clergy, such as being exempted from taxes. Respective leaders were charged with administration of churches. On P.134 - “Ottomans offered a new

home to the Jews expelled from Europe… operation of Jewish and Christian churches, schools and printing presses."

Unfortunately, the Ottomans, alongside many scholars, initially prohibited the printing press. When they finally did permit it, they did not permit the printing of religious books, yet allowed Non-Muslims to do so. This seemingly absurd legal verdict is an unfortunate indication of the stagnations of the Muslim world in later centuries. Although, of course, many of the simplistic narratives regarding the reasons for this stagnation (e.g. the common decline thesis which pins much of the blame on the likes of Ghazali) are not fully correct, and are at least partially refutable, if not fully, it is still certainly correct that the Muslim world experienced stagnation, and relative decline compared to the west, in later centuries.(https://youtu.be/4dEvEFBpVjg?si=0A25_KVidYPJGCW5).

Although the Ottomans certainly were one of the great Muslim empires, and played an important role in reunifying and reorganising the core states of the Muslim World after an age of crisis and conflict, there were, of course, like any other political entity, numerous issues which they fell into.

Of course, the Ottomans were not the only Muslim Gunpowder empire or political entity to exist, there were others including the Mughals. There were leaders such as the Akbar (P.173), who recognised or acknowledged religious and ethnic diversity. This was the policy of "Sulh-i-kul", or of "Peace to all" - one of universal toleration, each one free to practise their own religion. Thus, under his reign, the translation of Hindu epics into Persian was carried out, which was the single court language that was meant to transcend ethnic and religious divisions.

Akbar seems to have had a personal interest in religion, having held multiple Intra-religious discussions in Fatehpur Sikri. Abu al-Fazl wrote the Akbarnama, which combined factual events with what essentially amounted to proclaiming Akbar a "semi-divine being". Of course, things were not all rosy and dandy. For example, the Mughal emperor Jahangir who caused controversy, namely due to his executing of the 5th Sikh Guru Arjun, and imprisoning Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi. Furthermore, the figure of Aurangzeb is often criticised as a more conservative ruler. Although he did engage in a number of oppressive actions, in many cases, these were mainly politically, rather than religiously, motivated.

An interesting case, though not necessarily a muslim one, was that of the Mongols. "Another remarkable aspect of the Mongol Empire was its policy of religious toleration…". "Indeed, in 1218 when the Mongols invaded the Buddhist-dominated state of Kara-Khitai (in what is now Kazakhstan and Kirghizstan) Jebe, the Mongol general in charge of the operation, ended Buddhist persecution of Muslims."

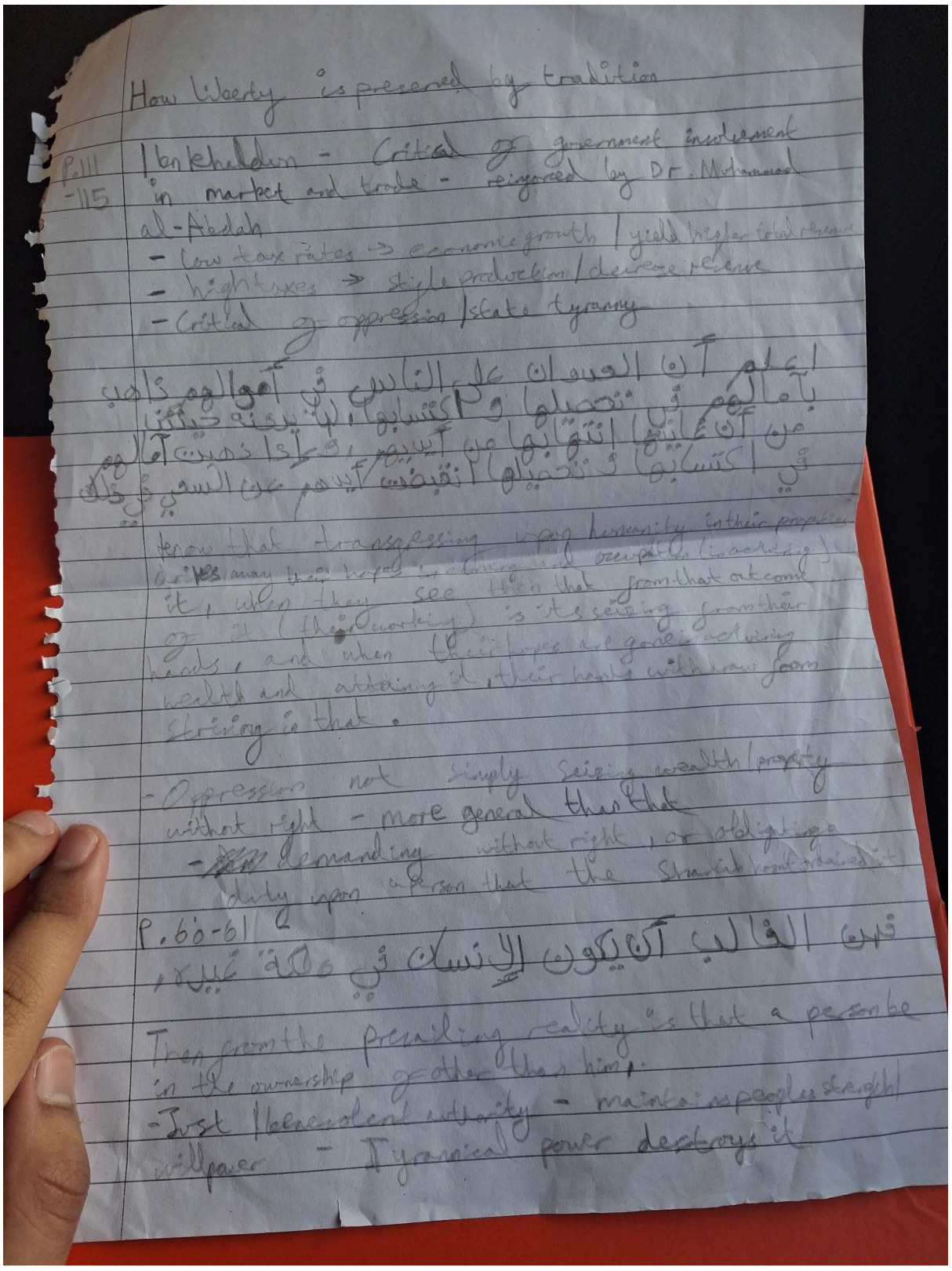
In fact, Ata Malik Juvaini proclaimed in view of this toleration of the Mongols - "...caused a herald to proclaim in the town that each should abide by his own religion and follow his own creed." (Ata Malik Juvaini, Genghis Khan, trans:J.A. Boyle).

"All sects were welcome to practise as they desired, and clergy of all faiths received respect and, generally, exemption from taxes." The sole requirement was prayers for Mongol rulers, which was seen as celestial insurance. Mongol rulers, queens, and other elites patronised

various religions, but rarely exclusively. In fact, we find many Mongolian queens who were Nestorian Christians. There were funds available for churches of any denomination, Buddhist temples, and Muslim Mosques. Such tolerance was not simply or merely the result of ideological conviction, but rather based on an understanding of imperial stability being based upon such tolerance for the subjects of the empire.

Interestingly enough, we see certain ideas, not just about the importance of tolerance, but of the importance of the state not being an all-pervasive force, developing within a pre-modern context. Take, for example, the writings of Ibn Khaldun. The passages I shall quote are specifically in an economic context, but this may also extend beyond that as well. Ibn Khaldun is critical of government involvement in the marketplace and in trade, and this is reinforced by Dr. Muhammad al-Abdah in his work “Nusoos Mukhtarah min Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldun (Selected Passages from the Ibn Khaldun’s Muqaddimah), see from pages 111-115.

A fundamental assumption that is made here is that low tax rates correlate to economic growth and a higher total revenue yield. In contrast, high taxes correlate to stifled production and a decrease in revenue. This thus reflects an attitude that is critical of a kind of state tyranny, one which is pervasive in the marketplace.


How liberty is presered by tradition
P.111 -115
Ibn Khaldun - Critical of government involvement in market and trade - reinforced by Dr. Muhammad al-Abdah
- low tax rates → economic growth / yield higher total revenue
- high taxes → stifle production / decrease revenue
- Critical of oppression / state tyranny
P.60-61

I tried using two AI models to transliterate this but they gave horrible results - definite reminder and lesson never to cheat your way with AI with translation work lol, cuz it won't always be reliable.

“Know that transgressing upon humanity in their population in their properties drives away their hopes in earning and occupation (in acquiring) it, when they see them that, from that outcome of it (their working) is its seizing from their hands, and when their hopes are gone in acquiring wealth and attaining it, their hands withdraw from striving in that.”

Thus, oppression is not simply in seizing wealth/property without right. In fact, it is more general than that. It also includes, though not exclusive to, demanding without right, or obligating a duty upon a person that (within the islamic framework) the religious law hasn’t ordained.

On p.60-61, we find, “Then from the prevailing reality is that a person be in the ownership of someone other than him”. Thus, there can either be Just/Benevolent authority, which maintains people's strength/willpower. Or, authority may be tyrannical, thus producing laziness, stagnation, and decadence in an individual, and in the community as a whole.

When it comes to the Islamic faith, a number of objections are normally raised in regards to its position regarding human or individual liberty. Again, whilst some of these may have an element of truth, or merit to them, framing is important here - fundamentally, Islam is its own framework, its own worldview, with its own set of assumptions about the world. As such, within the Islamic framework, these concepts of liberty, as well as of safety, authority, purity, etc, will be operationalised within this "tradition". I have discussed this in my work “Between Tradition, Modernity, and Progress”.

Nevertheless, a few specific issues require clarification here. I reference the works of UK based Muslim scholar Asrar Rashid, such as his two books - “Islam Answers Atheism” and "Intellectual Intifada”. For example, in Intellectual Intifada, he mentioned that an ideal muslim state (which he understands to be the Caliphate, for which he has expounded a model in this work of his - what I call the “Asrarian Model” for the Caliphate, which solves many of the objections raised at a Caliphate Model of governance) would not be an Orwellian Police State - not a tyrannical oppressive one, but rather, one which guaranteed basic rights for its citizens. It also emphasises the importance of free dialogue, with the self-confidence that Islam can answer the objections of any competing philosophy or system of thought.

This brings me on to the discussion regarding Apostasy and Blasphemy laws. One will note the Libertarian slant of many Traditionalists when they try to understand or frame these “laws” (See an earlier article of mine on this subject: https://substack.com/@thusalispoke/p-174570233). For example, I give the words of Dr Abdullah bin Hamid Ali:

“Only when one believes the Arabic word ‘din’ الدين to be a synonym of the English word ‘religion’ could one conclude that the Prophet Muhammad—God’s blessing and peace upon him—ordered the killing of “all” people who leave Islam. He clearly did not kill a number of his early followers who converted to Christianity or returned to paganism. He did not kill hypocrites who were clearly enemies of Islam undermining his authority. Nor did he have people who openly accosted and disparaged him executed. That aside, Muslims today

cannot claim that the view among scholars for most of Islamic history was that apostates should not be executed after a trial. It is quite the opposite. Any serious researcher, however, can see that this conclusion was the direct result of how Muslim jurists “interpreted” the Prophet’s words rather than an explicit univocal declaration from him. Consequently, execution for extreme heresy, the abandonment of prayer, and the denial of immutable teachings of Islam was proposed due to being interpreted as acts which constitute apostasy in light of the Prophet’s order to, “Kill anyone who changed his din.” My personal view is that apostasy (الردة) is more akin to defection rather than merely losing faith and choosing to move on from Islam. It means to leave Islam and to join the enemies of Muslims with the intention to destroy and undermine the Muslim polity. Had this not been a plausible read of the Prophet’s statement, neither Umar b. al-Khattab nor Sufyan al-Thawri—God be pleased with them both—would have deemed it permissible to impose a punishment other than execution upon the apostate defector. I have had a lot to say about apostasy and religious freedom over the years.”

In reality, in many Muslim countries, blasphemy/apostasy laws, not only being misunderstood and incorrectly applied (for it is akin to treason laws), but constitute a violation of the basic liberties and rights that are endowed upon humanity from their creator, regardless of religion or faith.

Again, there is a nuanced discussion to be had here. I appreciate the arguments of some that organised religion, or certain religious teachings, may be used, or may inherently give rise to certain teachings which encourage dogmatic attitudes, which may undermine the cause of individual and collective liberty. However, one must note how religious teachings can also give rise to attitudes in support of liberty, in being against state tyranny, in being against this kind of dogmatism and instead encouraging Intellectual dynamism. I aim to demonstrate the basis for this perspective, and how it is operationalised within the context of this “tradition”.

For example, take the work “Islam Our Choice”, published by The Woking Muslim Mission and Literary Trust (second reprint published in May 1963), which detailed many Native English converts to Islam, and their experiences with and perspective of the Faith. It is written in this work: “The modern concept, that the fundamental essence of law is liberty, is embodied in Islam. But this liberty has its limits; it ends where the public interest begins.” In fact, an important insight from the Islamic faith is as follows - we are all slaves to something. Whether it be our desires, fame, wealth, lineage, status, power, etc. Thus, true liberty comes from “submission” (the literal meaning of the word “Islam”) to the Divine.

Or, for example, take the words of Dr Hamid Marcus, who is cited in this work:

“Throughout the years I have noticed time and again with deepest satisfaction that Islam holds the golden mean between Individualism and Socialism… it is unbiased and tolerant, it always appreciates the good, wherever it may happen to come across it.”

“I always believed that the organisation of human society must be based on disciplined freedom or, in other words, on an order which respects liberty, and that tradition must be reconciled with progress, which should be nothing else but the adaptation of tradition to

actual conditions. No wonder that, having been educated in the spirit of the “middle path”. I am a “man of the middle path” too, and may be called a “progressive traditionalist”. “

“I have found Islam to be congenial to my mind and to the ideology in which I was educated in my infancy. I have found in Islam a perfect and complete code of life, which code is able to guide an individual and the community towards the kingdom of God on earth and which is elastic enough to be adapted to modern conditions. Being a theorist of culture and sociology, I am enchanted by the social institutions of Islam, in particular by the zakat, the law of inheritance, the prohibition of usury including interest, the prohibition of aggressive wars, the injunctions of Hajj… right path between Capitalism and Communism… firm basis to rational pacifism.”

In the book “Most Common Questions” by popular Muslim Apologist Dr.Zakir Naik, he mentions as follows: “...De Lacy O’Leary in his book "Islam at the Crossroads” (P.8): “History makes it clear, however, that the legend of fanatical Muslims sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of the sword upon conquered races is one of the most fanatically absurd myths that historians have ever repeated”.

(In a similar vein, C.H. Becker notes in his work “Islam and Christianity”, stating,”the theory, however, that the Mohammedan conquerors and their successors were inspired by a fanatical hatred of Christianity is a fiction invented by Christians.").

He also cites from Thomas Carlyle’s “Heroes and Hero Worship”, “One man alone of the whole world believes it. There is one man against all men. That he takes a sword and tries to propagate it with that will do little for him. You must get your sword! On the whole, a thing will propagate itself as it can.”

He goes on to quote the verse of the Quran - “There is no compulsion in religion…” (Quran 2:256). “Islam was spread by the sword of intellect, a sword that conquers the hearts and minds of people.”

What other theological discussions may have an effect on our understandings of liberty? May we perhaps cite the following Hadith Qudsi, the Mulla Ali Al-Qari relates in his Sharh Fiqh Al-Akbar from Saheeh Muslim - “My mercy precedes my anger.” Perhaps this slant towards mercy, ought to have a natural effect on how muslims, at least theoretically, ought to organise their society.

“Aisha reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Avoid applying legal punishments against the Muslims if you are able. If the criminal has a way out, then leave him to his way. Verily, for the leader to err in pardoning is better than to err in punishing.” Imam al-Tirmidhi commented, “It has likewise been narrated from more than one of the companions of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, that they said the same as this.” Source: Sunan al-Tirmidhī 1424.” (https://www.abuaminaelias.com/dailyhadithonline/2013/01/23/pardon-better-than-punishing/) .

Naturally, discussions regarding free will and predestination may come into play here. Although they will not always translate into political or social doctrine or practise, it is important to note how it may have an effect on it. Naturally, if one believes he does or doesn't have free will, it will affect how they conceive of their own actions and their incentive to strive to work hard in this world.

If we look at Al-Aqeeda At-Tahawiyya, which is a standard work of primary creed for the Asharis and Maturidis, we quickly realise the compatibilist approach these schools tend to employ, coupled with an understanding of the mysterious nature of free will and fate that is not fully accessible to the human mind. For example, point 45 states - "And the fundamental principle of predestination is the secret of Allah, exalted is he, in his creation". Point 105 asserts - "And it is between extremism and laxity… between determinism and absolute free will…"

Another work I may cite here is "Al-Ibanah" by ibn Battah, from the Athari school (although he has received severe criticism by Khateeb Al-Baghdadi, although defended by Ibn Jawzi). In V.2, he entitles a chapter as follows: "Chapter: Faith that God, high and exalted is he, wrote upon Adam sin before he created him, then whoever refutes that, then it is from the perishing sects." (From Narration Number 1378 to 1393).

Narration number 1380 is as follows - "Adam and Moses disputed (with each other); then Moses said: "(Are) you the one who led astray humanity and you brought them out from heaven to the earth?" He (The Prophet, Peace be upon him) said: Then Adam said to Moses: "You are Moses, the one who Allah chose with his messengership, and he chose you for himself, and he sent down upon you the Torah?" He said: "Yes". Adam said: "Then did you find it written upon me before (the fact) that he created me?" (I.e. The act which caused the fall from heaven). The Messenger of God said: "Then Adam established (decisive) proof upon Moses… (Three times)."

Returning back to the topic of liberty within the social/political organisation of society, there is an interesting report regarding the fourth Caliph, Ali (may God be pleased with him), and the Khawarij. Of course, this conflict emerged after Ali and Muawiya appointed arbiters during the course of the First Fitna, leading to the Khawarij excommunicating them on the basis of the Quranic verse - "Is the judgement not except but for God." (Quran 12:40). The reply of the fourth caliph is famous, not only because it serves as an important principle when dealing with any polemical discussion - "A word of truth by which is intended falsehood." (https://www.abuaminaelias.com/dailyhadithonline/2013/01/18/kharijites-word-haqq-intend-batil/).

The debate between Ibn Abbas and the khawarij is also well known, where a third of them are reported as having repented afterwards - demonstrating that the emphasis was primarily on intellectual and spiritual persuasion, with fighting being a final resort due to the violent political threat they posed, as extremist renegades against the Caliph. Abu Mansur Al-Baghdadi relates the following report in his Farq bayn Al-Firaq:

"Ali ibn Abi Talib said to the Khawarij,"there are three (matters), we will not begin with fighting (you), and we will not prevent you from the mosques of God, that you remember in it the

name of God, and we will not prevent you from the war booty as long as your hands remain with ours."

An interesting work on the subject of liberty in the Islamic faith is "The Freedom of Opinion in Islam" by Abdus Salam al-Basuni. In 1994, Al-Basyony responded to western objections to Islam. He gives various narrations on this, such as the following - "...a man came to Sufyan Ath-Thawri and said to him: "When I am with the Muhtasib (Comptroller), we climb walls to surprise evil-doers". Sufyan Ath-Thawri denounced that, and this was supported by Al-Mawardi. He also relates from Abu Yusuf, who relates from Umar bin Abdul Aziz - "Do not hit any man if he is late in paying his taxes. Do not harass people to pay taxes…".

The home is considered to be a place of privacy, not for the state to be an all-pervasive, Orwellian entity to be intrusive into them. There is the famous incident of the Second Caliph Umar:

" Once, 'Umar ibnul Khattab (radiyallahu 'anhu) went out [on patrol] and saw the glow of a fire. He was accompanied by 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (radiyallahu 'anhu). He followed the light until he entered the property, where he saw a lamp glowing in one of the rooms. 'Umar (radiyallahu 'anhu) entered, -and this was in the middle of the night-. He found an elderly man sitting, with intoxicants in front of him and a female singer singing to him. The elderly man did not notice 'Umar (radiyallahu 'anhu) until 'Umar (radiyallahu 'anhu) surprised him [by appearing in front of him].
'Umar (radiyallahu 'anhu) said: "I have never seen a sight worse than this tonight; an elderly man awaiting his death in such a state!" The elderly man raised his head and said: "No, O Amirul Mu-minin, what you have done is worse. You have spied on me, and spying has been prohibited, and you entered without permission."
'Umar (radiyallahu 'anhu) said: "You have spoken the truth." He then left, biting his hand and crying, saying: "May Umar's mother be bereaved of him if his Rabb does not forgive him!" ". (https://hadithanswers.com/umar-radiyallahu-anhu-sees-an-old-man-drinking-alcohol/).

"A man peeped through a round hole into the dwelling place of the Prophet, while the Prophet (ﷺ) had a Midray (an iron comb) with which he was scratching his head. the Prophet (ﷺ) said, " Had known you were looking (through the hole), I would have pierced your eye with it (i.e., the comb)." Verily! The order of taking permission to enter has been enjoined because of that sight, (that one should not look unlawfully at the state of others). " (https://sunnah.com/bukhari:6241).

He also discusses the sanctity of both private/telephone conversations, which should not be transgressed by wiretapping or publicising (from Dr Ahmad Fathi Suroor, Al-Waseet). See my work "The Myth of Islamic Intolerance" for more quotes on this topic. I give the following passage from that work:

"The Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) sent letters to various kings surrounding Arabia declaring his intention for peace and cooperation. One such letter was written to the monks of St. Catherine's Monastery of Mount Sinai in 628 A.D. and known today as the "Charter of Privileges." The letter reads: "This is a message from Muhammad, son of Abdullah, as a covenant to those who adopt Christianity, near and far, we are with them. Verily I, the servants, the helpers, and my followers defend them, because Christians are my citizens;

and by Allah! I hold out against anything that displeases them. No compulsion is to be on them. Neither are their judges to be removed from their jobs nor their monks from their monasteries. No one is to destroy a house of their religion, to damage it, or to carry anything from it to the Muslims' houses. Should anyone take any of these, he would spoil God's covenant and disobey His Prophet. Verily, they are my allies and have my secure charter against all that they hate. No one is to force them to travel or to oblige them to fight. The Muslims are to fight for them. If a female Christian is married to a Muslim, it is not to take place without her approval. She is not to be prevented from visiting her church to pray. Their churches are to be respected. They are neither to be prevented from repairing them nor the sacredness of their covenants. No one of the nation of (Muslims) is to disobey the covenant till the Last Day (end of the world)."

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